

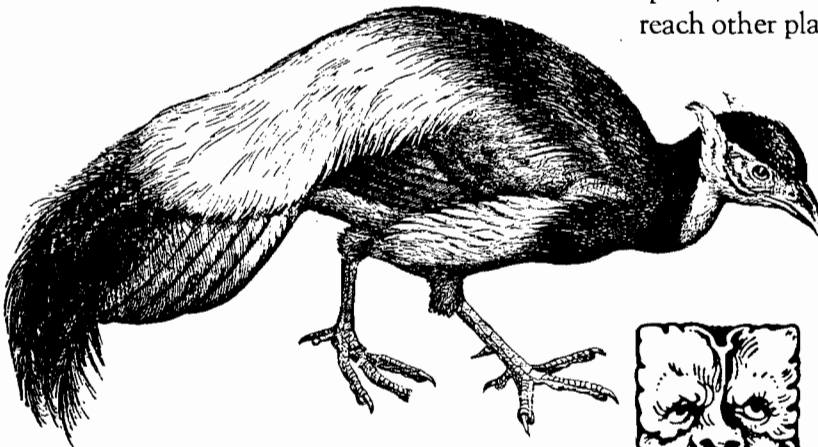


OPERATION MERCY: The Parable of the Computer

George Abbe
Plattsburgh, New York

This story by George Abbe was written twenty-five years ago. The misuse of animals in elementary and secondary school science education is perhaps less extensive now, but the implied description of society remains accurate.

There was a society of human beings who were very civilized and very advanced in all their studies and their ways of living. Especially were they skilled in the sciences. Their technocracy was unmatched in the history of the race. So vast was their knowledge and so complete their mastery of nature, they dominated the ocean, the land, the air; they traveled at fantastic speeds, and even invented vehicles that could reach other planets.



Jim Harter, *Animals*: 1419
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FICTION

Out of the rock of the earth they mined the ingredients for the metals that sent their buildings soaring a hundred stories skyward. They exploited soil, forests, wind, and water for their unconquerable power. So competent at assembling data were these people, so clever at attaining whatever they set their minds to, that it seemed as though they had become gods. They were flawless calculators: they could predict the weather; they could foretell how all things in the physical realm would grow and change. They could analyze their personalities and tell unhappy persons how to act; they could estimate what businesses and governments were going to do, and they would do it; control crops, wars, intellectual, social, and sporting activities; commercial goods and community services; motorized traffic, animal life, and resources.

“Albert Schweitzer was a great man, Jory. He taught us that even insects have traits like ours — the desire for happiness, the urges to mate, play, investigate, be quiet, contented, and secure; even the spider is worthy of our help and pity.”

Through their communication media, TV, radio, the press, the most important people, the owners, shaped and directed the minds of the public in any way they desired. The scientists, who were considered infallible and were the chief consultants of government and determined all they did, went so far in their

investigation of matter that they began to understand the sperm that reproduced life and were at last on the verge of creating life itself in a test tube.

Wars, of course, which had always been profitable, were continued; but, even here, they were kept under strict and scientific control. Only smaller wars — and that degree of fighting and dying on foreign soil — were permitted which the public by scientific analysis — polls, psychologists' tabulations — would tolerate. Just as in the case of traffic deaths, deaths in battle were limited to numbers that a gullible community would accept without rebellion.

In spite of the fact that this society had everything figured out — all the wealth and expertise, the instruments and intellect, to make it happy, creative, and aglow with goodwill, it was not happy, and it was torn by great conflicts and troubles. And the oddest thing of all was that its difficulties — racial, economic, and international — seemed to reach the highest peak in history just as these same people discovered the most remarkable, the most sensational invention ever known — the computer.

Now, the computer was an extension of the human mind — a mechanical device which ingested information, correlated, expanded, and systematized unlimited data and applied this immense storehouse of knowledge to mortal affairs with a proficiency never dreamed of by the mind alone — and with a versatility that seemed insatiable, almost magical.

The computer was an inspired device, so ingenious it could create for people almost any fate they chose: it could save or destroy them.

The only trouble was that most of the citizens were not ready for it. They looked upon

this innovation with suspicion, as a metal "monster," a menace, a Frankenstein. From such a mechanized brain, they felt, little good could come; and in those metallic bowels lived demons as real as the ones that frightened superstitious souls in the Middle Ages.

It was not uncommon to hear a man on the street saying to his neighbor:

"Computers? Damn robot dictators. They'll be running our lives before long. They'll come right into our homes and make our private lives into public information; they'll walk right into our business offices, our studies, our bedrooms, and start turning over to the Government statistics about our most personal affairs."

And so, as in the case of all previous revolutionary ideas, discoveries, inventions, there was fear, prejudice, opposition. The computer, many said, would mechanize, dry up, sterilize man.

Who would have predicted what was soon to occur — that it was, in fact, not a cruel, annihilating monster, but the greatest, most sensational savior of life in the history of the planet?

In one of the small towns of this society so highly favored by the Creator, so rich in natural resources and mental endowment, in conveniences and luxuries, in the arts of entertainment and the privileges of sport, where every individual was protected from birth to grave by so many forms of intricate insurance that only experts could keep in touch and offer legal counsel — in one of these small, pleasant, suburban towns lived two families side by side, families quite typical of their world in the material advantages they enjoyed, but different in their philosophy of moral values. In one of these white houses, flawlessly equipped with every up-to-date gadget and appliance, lived the Donald

Baynes. Mrs. Bayne gave her son, Frank, a .22 rifle for his birthday. Frank went out into the field behind his house; he saw a pretty, bright-colored bird, and his sense of power, the will to dominate and be the arbiter of life and death, made him aim at the songbird and calmly pull the trigger.

Frank had seen his biology teacher cut up living things in class; he had seen TV movies where boys shot passing bus-drivers from their living-room windows.

When Frank returned home, carrying his hunting prize, the black and yellow songster, his mother, Mrs. Bayne, was surprised and delighted.

"My, what a beautiful bird! That's wonderful, Frank! What a good shot you must be!"

And several times that day she praised her son, who had been raised on the theory most universal in the country at this time — the Theory of Permissiveness: in education, aim exclusively at making everyone happy, because in that way you don't stir up parental criticism — and in all walks of life, let everybody do about what he pleased and if you have to deal out punishment, make it light and brief.

Now, they felt this way about penalties because there wasn't enough room in the jails if you started taking laws seriously, policing them justly, and actually imposing reasonably heavy fines, or, if the money could not be paid, sentencing the guilty to proper jail terms.

Now, in the house next to the Baynes lived the family of Andrew Trent. Mrs. Trent was of a disposition somewhat different from that of Mrs. Bayne, so that when her son, Jory, found a bird injured on the ground and brought it into the house and proposed that he take it to his biology class where they cut up live creatures and studied physical conditions so they

could assemble data like the data-crazed scientists who wrote the books they studied — Mrs. Trent took the bird in her hands and said in her warm, generous, caressing tones:

"Poor creature. Everything alive is important, Jory. Let's try to save it."

And she got a box and a knotty branch of a tree and grass and food and made a home for the bird. And her face was gentle with concern and love.

"Albert Schweitzer was a great man, Jory. He taught us that even insects have traits like ours — the desire for happiness, the urges to mate, play, investigate, be quiet, contented, and secure; even the spider is worthy of our help and pity."

Jory listened. He was a most sensitive and responsive boy, full of curiosity, friendliness, and affection. In his family he had experienced the security of love and outgoing help and understanding, and so he quite naturally felt love for the world around him. The good fortune that made him a more mature child, one of the morally elect, he would try to confer on things he encountered.

When the bird was healed and flourished, Jory could not wait to release it. Frank, who put mice in a small cramped cage and teased them 'til they fought each other viciously (he was imitating his science teacher who crowded rats together 'til they ate their own children to prove that over-population among people is bad) — Frank could not accept this idea of letting the bird go.

"My science teacher says we have to know how everything works. Why don't you give it different kinds of drugs and see how it reacts? The Government does this when they try out a new drug on a dog 'til it kills it."

"I don't know," said Jory, frowning. "I just like to see everything let loose. I like to be out there myself in the fields that way, where I'm

not shut in." He laughed. "I got trapped in my cave one day: a rock fell across the tunnel. I couldn't get out 'til after dark, when Dad came. It scared me — real good."

Frank scoffed loudly.

"What's that got to do with the bird? You're a damn sissy."

This accusation didn't bother Jory. He just grinned tolerantly, and went on with the job at hand, making a book-case for his room. Jory was so secure that he didn't often clash with his friends, and his composure made him a natural leader for them, and any difference of opinion didn't rile him; he just found all dramatic contrasts rather intriguing and even antagonists to be objects of enjoyable study. He would defend himself with his fists, valiantly and effectively, if he had to, but physical violence seemed to him dull and meaningless.



Jim Harter, *Animals: 1419*
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Frank Bayne won lots of prizes doing experiments at school. He cut up pigs just to see how they functioned; he took mice home and injected them with cancer and observed, over the weeks, exactly how they weakened, suffered, died. He burned the skin off half the body of a rabbit, as they did at Harvard University off the body of a dog, to see how long it would survive.

Two of the most intriguing operations, for which he was praised and which won him prizes at the Science Fair were: first, his "hot-box" for mice, a wire cage in which electric shots through a grid made the mice suffer rather eloquently when they went after food; and second, he imitated a distinguished contribution to progress conceived by Ford Motor Co. and conspicuously lauded by newspapers and public — fastening a pregnant animal in a car and crashing it against a barrier at high speed. Of course, Ford used monkeys and Frank could only use mice and a small four-foot-long vehicle which he ran down a hillside on tracks — but the results were similar and quite edifying for the community and propitious for the future of science.

Also, as a member of 4-H, Frank could express his scientific genius convincingly. He won top prizes for his expertise in thrift. "Battery" cow and poultry farms were all the thing now — calves and hens crowded into dark "controlled" places, to save room and permit more "efficiency," never allowed out to have air or light or natural feeding conditions or the feel of earth, the calves going from darkness and forced fattening to death without a moment's pleasure, the hens laying eggs in the dark, never seeing the light, the eggs rolling down a conveyor, the feed falling into the feeder, the hen never knowing dirt or bugs or fresh air, never allowed to move

about, packed in so she couldn't if she wanted to.

This mass production, said the Department of Agriculture, was going to be a wonderful thing for the under-developed countries, the speediest way to build their economy for democracy. And Frank Bayne demonstrated for his fellow 4-H'ers just how efficient it was by showing what big poultry farmers had demonstrated to him.

He had brought the 4-H Club to his experimental chicken-house, all metal, all scientifically equipped and darkened.

"Now," he said to his young high-school associates, "I'll show you what happens to a chicken who lays so efficiently when you change her habits. Let this be a lesson — never let her out of this modern, improved chicken-house. Now ..."

He pulled a lever. A chicken was forced out into the light — which she had never seen before — by a metal prod.

The chicken blinked a few times, staggered, and dropped dead.

Frank acquired quite a reputation for all this progressive activity, and he was nicknamed by his teachers "The Giant of Science." Everywhere he went he was lauded and feted. He attended more dinners in his honor in a year than the local baseball player who was playing on the Pittsburgh Pirate farm team.

"You see," Jory's mother said to her son, "science is power; it means advanced devices for money-making, the means for national supremacy in war and space travel; and science runs our Government and society, so naturally the scientific student is the sacred hero of our day."

Jory didn't like all the experiments Frank and his technological colleagues engaged in; he, Jory, was interested in languages, himself

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— a most impractical, downgraded, “square” area of study, denigrated and sneered at by the healthy, aggressive, all-American youth going into what every promising youngster sought — a high-salary field, prestige, money, influence.

Jory didn’t care for Frank’s activities — in fact he loathed them; but his path and Frank’s didn’t often cross, and so he didn’t have a direct clash over such cruelty — until the day he saw the water-wheel experiment and the blinded rabbits.

He was in the back yard, hoeing the vegetable garden, when Frank called:

“Hey, come over here, Jory. I’ve got something wonderful to show you.”

Reluctantly, Jory went. He saw a tread-mill revolving in water. A mouse was running the tread-mill, keeping himself just above the water by hurrying when the wheel threatened to carry him under if he remained on it. He didn’t want to jump into the water, to remain running was his only hope.

“Guess how long this mouse has been running,” exulted Frank.

“I don’t know.”

“Seventy-two hours. My science teacher, Mr. Farnham, showed me how. Now watch. The mouse gets sleepy.” Frank laughed. “Who wouldn’t?”

As Jory gazed spellbound and horrified, the mouse, in its scrabbling desperation, became unsteady, weak; it seemed to grow dizzy, slipped, wavered, almost toppled — then managed to keep upright. Its tiny legs pumped frantically.

“It’s almost asleep,” said Frank.

The mouse crouched down by clinging cleverly to the side of the wheel; it could lower its body so it rested on the flange of the wheel just long enough to catch a brief nap.

Its eyes closed, and it collapsed into sleep.

“Now, watch!” exclaimed Frank. “This is the way Mr. Farnham does it.”

He took a cap pistol out of a drawer, and holding it close to the mouse’s ear, fired it off. The mouse staggered up, and began to run again, groggily. Fear kindled his dimming eyes.

Frank laughed.

“He’ll keep going for a while now,” he said.

“How long do you do this?” asked Jory.

“Until he dies.”

Jory felt something strange for him — a flame of rage, an open and irresistible hate, mounting in his blood.

“You mean you deliberately kill the poor creature — drive him ‘til he dies?”

Frank’s face glowed; he raised his head proudly.

“Of course. You have to — to prove the point of the experiment.”

Jory tried to curb his anger, his incredulous horror.

“They do the same thing with dogs right at the labs in town,” Frank said. “They force dogs to swim ‘til they die in the water.”

“What does it prove?”

“Endurance tests for humans.”

“And how long do these mice stand this strain?”

“Sometimes a hundred hours or more.”

“And the psychology teachers do this — at school?”

“They do it in schools everywhere.”

Jory watched the struggling mouse. An overwhelming impulse had seized him — the impulse to seize the mouse, take it out, and release it.

“Now, look at this!” Frank exclaimed.

He took Jory to a shed in which ten rabbits were fastened in a row.

“A cosmetics company does this,” he said, “to test the effect of mascara on the eyes before selling the product, — you know, the

way the Government's Drug Administration tests drugs — poisons thousands of dogs by stronger and stronger doses 'til they die. They all *have* to die."

Frank sounded as though this was a most delectable morsel of fact.

"Not one survives," he said.

"And these rabbits?"

"They'll all be blind."

"Why?"

"Because the mascara is applied in heavier doses — it contains a poison and as soon as the rabbit is blind, we know that's the toleration limit for that ingredient in the mascara."

Jory seldom swore, but he did now.

"Jesus Christ," he said in a low voice. "Holy Christ. You mean you really do?"

"Do what?"

"Do all this. And science teachers *tell* you to?"

"Of course. They do it themselves."

Jory went close to the row of imprisoned rabbits, immobilized by their necks. He could see that the eyes of some looked glazed. He waved a hand in front of them. Their eyes did not react.

The rage that had been steadily rising in him now exploded:

"Why, you're warped!" he shouted. His face was beet-red. "You're the worst kind of criminals! No criminals could think up such torture. You're insane — sadistic — madmen! Cannibals couldn't be so vicious!"

He was panting. His eyesight was blurred by his anger.

"Perverts!" he cried. "Perverts worse than sexual perverts! Perverts dreaming up new tortures! Prizes for tortures — that's what they give you, Frank! — prizes for the worst kind of torture you can think up!"

As we have noted, Jory was the most

poised, self-controlled, tactful of his whole class at school, of which he was President. Seldom did he flare up, and never in his life had he been swept by such fury.

He seized the wooden bars of the rabbit pens, and with all his healthy, latent strength, he tore them off. There was a burlap bag in the corner. One by one, he put the rabbits in the bag, and when Frank tried to stop him, he just knocked him off his feet. His moral righteousness, the blazing justice on his side, gave him extraordinary strength. As his mother used to tell him, in relating the story of Sir Galahad, in the tales of King Arthur:

"He would win any battle. His strength was the strength of ten because his heart was pure."

So now, Jory just clobbered Frank whenever he got near him. Then he went back into the barn, where the mouse was fighting for life, inexorably dying with each passing minute, and he grabbed the mouse off the wheel, and smashed the wheel with his foot. And when Frank came hurtling against him, swinging both fists and screaming:

"You sissy yellow-belly!"

He just unloaded a few more sweet, tough blows into his face and guts, so that Frank crumpled up and lay against the wall, the blood trickling from mouth and nostrils.

"You like violence," Jory said. "You always talk about TV and how good all that shooting and fist-fighting is. Now, there's a bit of it in a good cause, for a change."

He put the mouse in his coat pocket, buttoned the flap down. Then he picked up the bag of rabbits. At the door, he turned.

"'Operation Mercy,'" he said. "That's what we'll call it. We'll put the blind rabbits to sleep so they won't suffer from your torture any more. The others we'll let go with the mouse."

And he wheeled about, and with bag over shoulder, like an enraged Santa Claus, he strode out.

Frank didn't dare to make trouble about this episode: his face was too obviously messed up; but his parents were fired to a frenzy by the insult, and they swore revenge. Their son — The Giant of Science! robbed of his experiment properties, and beaten up in addition! They went to the police. The police came to the Trents. They could find no mice or rabbits. When they threatened arrest for assault, Jory's parents said they would bring charges of extreme cruelty against the Baynes — torturing and blinding, outside of an approved laboratory — which was illegal, and could be prosecuted.

The fight became a stand-off.



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One day, Jory was sitting at the bus stop opposite the school, all by himself. The sun was hot, and he was relaxing.

There had been a lot in the papers about his clash with the Baynes. Some of the English and language teachers had even come out in support of Jory, had written a letter to the local paper saying that science went too far in its curiosity, data-gathering, unfeeling methods and demands upon people and nature, that the repetition of so much cruelty each year, cutting up piglets, hamsters, frogs, and rabbits, and injecting mice with cancer, instead of using films, tissue-culture, etc. — that all that was unreasonable, was unnecessary.

This backing for his criticism of what he called "barbaric" experimenting — for Jory had had a letter in the school paper and had labelled so-called "progressive," "necessary" methods just that — "barbaric" — this backing had deeply warmed and inspired him — and his parents, as well, who were one-hundred percent in agreement on this issue.

As he rested there, a stranger came up to him and sat down on the bench.

"You're Jory Trent, aren't you?" He held out his hand. "I'm Mike Dacey. From the Vandon Company."

Jory was sharp. He read a lot.

"Computers," he said.

The Vandon Company, along with IBM, had been much in the news.

"Right! And I've heard of you, too. I've been reading about your battle over the brutal, sickening lab tortures."

Jory glanced at Mr. Dacey. He was a light-complexioned, energetic-looking fellow with intense, glistening eyes and ruddy cheeks, and a mobile mouth that shaped his words

expertly and thoughtfully, as though respecting each syllable.

"Jory — all that horror is unnecessary."

Jory shook his head.

"That's a slogan we keep repeating, that the ends don't justify the means; but I know it's a losing cause. Science claims they can't help people without doing these things to animals first; and I suppose they do achieve some positive results."

"Very few, Jory. When you consider the waste of billions of dollars, living creatures, and time; the stupid kinds of experiments they think up — like hitting a dog over the head to find out the facts about football helmets for some government 'study group' — hitting the dog heavier and heavier blows until he dies — and do you know what the conclusion was — literally, their actual 'findings' after their stupendous study group had studied for so long?"

"What?"

"I quote: 'It is better to wear a helmet than not to wear one.'"

Jory experienced that deep-down nauseated sensation he'd felt when he saw that wretched mouse running, running in desperate despair — the mouse psychologists claimed was teaching children something very important by dying this way. They could not learn otherwise — except by seeing the actual death, as in the cancer study, and the burning-the-skin-off-half-the-body study, and dog's swimming 'til final exhaustion, and the bleeding-from-the-heart-test on rabbits. It all had physically sickened him.

"Now," said Mr. Dacey, "they may make a contribution with the Salk vaccine and one or two other things along the way, but they can't lick the common cold and they never find a cure for cancer and never will; and fundamentally, the little achievement they make

is not worth all the crazy projects and horror and repetition and waste of life and expenditure — staggering costs to the taxpayer.

"And the whole immoral practice of using the helpless for human ends, without any consent on their part — just coercion — is filthy and dehumanized, no matter how good the ends; and because it is immoral, the ultimate evil of torture, it backfires — has often, as in the Thalidomide case of the deformed babies — and as it will again and again as we experiment to create life itself and invent monsters; because, as the Bible says: 'God is not mocked.' If we indulge in immoral means, in absolute evil to achieve so-called 'good,' we shall suffer worse and worse penalties — and eventually complete destruction."

He paused, and studied the boy sitting beside him.

"Now," he said, "what is your impression of the computer?"

Jory thought for a minute.

"It's a very clever instrument; it figures out complicated stuff and saves a lot of time."

"And money," added Mike.

"But it's a kind of monster — a Frankenstein," said Jory. "It threatens the world with a sort of dictatorship of technology, a big, impersonal, mechanical, cold-blooded menace."

Mike laughed.

"You're the pulse of the people, Jory. That's just what the man on the street believes."

"And it's not true?"

Mike Dacey stood up. He was lithe and handsome; his fair hair and complexion glowed in the sun like a Greek god's.

"I'll tell you about what I'll do with you. I'll get you into some labs where the experiments are done with animals. Then I'll show you how the same research is done on a computer."

Jory sat up. A deep, rich eagerness pervaded him.

"Great! I'd like that. Maybe I could do something. There's nothing that would please me more, after seeing what the science and psychology teachers are telling students like Frank to do. Once they get the approval of the schools, they go berserk."

"Right," said Mike Dacey. "That whole situation is one of the rottenest in human history — education sanctioning needless torture and killing on a scale too vast to conceive of. Men have a choice — or they can commit suicide. The innocent animal has no such alternatives or way out."

Mike unfolded his *New York Times*.

"Now, here," he said, "is a full-page ad by the only organization in the U.S. that really knows the score and is fighting the vanguard battles of the Big Revolution — really hitting where it hurts — United Action for Animals, Inc."

Mike laid the open page on the bench, pointed to the figures in the ad.

"See? Ten cases of grants given by the National Institutes of Health — they are the big outfit that decides where two billion dollars of taxpayer money will go in scientific research. Note: — the five experiments that used animals spent this total. The five in the same category of research that used computers and tissue culture — all the more efficient, precise-science methods, *without* animals — cost only this ..."

He pointed.

"Wow!" exulted Jory. "Look at the fantastic difference!"

"Exactly! And with Congress in a mood of thrift, which heats up more daily, you can see we're going to make this thing fly — the time is right. Pressures of all kinds can be exerted; and as we jam up the unlimited funds — that is, unlimited before — of the dictator biologist, the sacred-cow scientist,

and force the Government to see how many billions of dollars can be saved, and force them to begin training new scientists in the use of math, physics, simulation, model-engineering, use of tissue culture, etc. — as we compel this, since any dope, even a politician, can see by this ad that reason must prevail and the obvious swindling of the past — needless and pointlessly repetitive research — is washed up — as we do all this we are, simultaneously, saving billions of creatures from unimaginable suffering."

Jory was goggle-eyed.

"My God," he said, "I should think it would mean that stuff like that ..." He pointed to the picture in the ad — a dog being taken from a metal drum, legs crushed unconscious; the caption read: "The Famous Collip Drum. Spikes and knobs inside. Dog's legs tied. He is rotated 'til every bone in body broken. Lives a few hours. A commonplace form of experiment in America." — "I should think that stuff like that," said Jory, "would never have to happen again. I should think the Government would demand that all experiments be shifted at once — from the old barbaric ways to the new ones."

Mike laughed.

"It's not so easy. All the vested interests, the stupid people who won't change, the Establishment that's getting grants for moronic projects because they've got to make their income somehow, the hucksters in suffering, like dog dealers who steal more pets off the streets than the numbers of dogs they actually raise for torture, because the cost of growing them for dog years makes the price prohibitive for labs to pay, so scientists force pounds to turn them over, or pay dog-nappers maybe half as much as the price of the dealers, to deliver the illegal product — and the public has to be hung on the hook of stolen

pets — *their* pets — by the hundreds of thousands — all these elements of the public fight tooth-and-nail to prevent the change to simulation, to keep the old methods and old gangster medical czars and drug-thugs and researchers in the saddle.”

Jory was aroused, angry.

“But, in time ...”

“In time we have to win,” said Mike. “Not because anyone in power gives a damn about morality, decency, or pity, but because the Almighty Buck is involved — the clamor for savings is on — and so, *economic* considerations, ironically, will save the animals who have been used and tortured so long by science and industry for economic interests.”

“The monster!” murmured Jory. “The metal brain.”

“Yes,” laughed Mike, “the biggest irony of all — the computer — the one thing you and the public think will invade our private lives and mechanize and dehumanize us and destroy human values — this very Menace has become The Savior; the cold-blooded, merciless Bulldozer of all kindness, love, goodness, will be the Great Humanitarian.”

Jory snapped his fingers. His face was illuminated; his elation, his new alertness, made him seem even more mature.

“Then ideals aren’t dead! We can still win a victory!”

“We have to win, Jory. Nothing can stop us. And I call this whole project of the computer, the Irony Redeemer — I call it ‘Operation Mercy.’”

Mike Dacey arranged for Jory to visit a few labs.

“But don’t lose your temper and slug someone,” the computer representative said. And he laughed. “— the way you did poor old Frank.”

Jory promised. But he found it hard to

control himself. The dogs, rabbits, mice, monkeys, etc., were enduring such hell, in so many forms — obvious to him even though the officials tried to gloss things over and point out the nice shiny equipment and just-scrubbed housing — even though the special-visitor treatment spruced up the whole works with consummate skill — it was so patently bad that Jory was nauseated almost intolerably, — not only by the infinite torture and pain these doomed creatures must undergo, but by the transparent lies these officials thought he’d swallow. But Jory had talked with Mike several times; he had been reading a lot of literature from United Action for Animals, Inc. and other leading humane organizations; and he was aware of many facts that would have surprised these researchers (for example, he knew some of the monkeys he saw just arriving would be locked in metal vises for a full lifetime of 8 or 9 years, never being able to move in any direction in all that while) and so he read through the lies he was told, and was sickened — but kept his tongue, as he promised Mike he would.

In a town near the one where Jory lived there was a rich man named Corey Usher, who was scientifically-minded. His two sons, Arnie and Wayne, were badly spoiled; and when their father spent thousands of dollars on reckless caprices — his own and theirs — involving scientific equipment and experiment, Arnie and Wayne were quite pompous, swell-headed, and lorded it over the other boys:

“Get into the Big Time,” they jeered.

And since the most up-to-date public topic of that day was space travel and the exploits of men training for journeys to other planets, one of the Usher boys’ ventures was the building of a rocket in imitation of their adult heroes. Great sums of money were spent to

make this vehicle exactly like its huge and complicated prototype at the Government launching pads. All kinds of aid and expertise were extended to the youngsters by *Science Magazine*, *American Boys' Heritage*, *Readers' Digest*, and such national organizations as Rotary, the American Legion, Boy's World, the Boy Scouts. Even Senators permitted their names to be used as supporting the project, since, as one of them put it:

"Nothing is more important than the interest of our children in the glorious paths of scientific inquiry and wonder and the doors they can open for all of us into new vistas of progress."

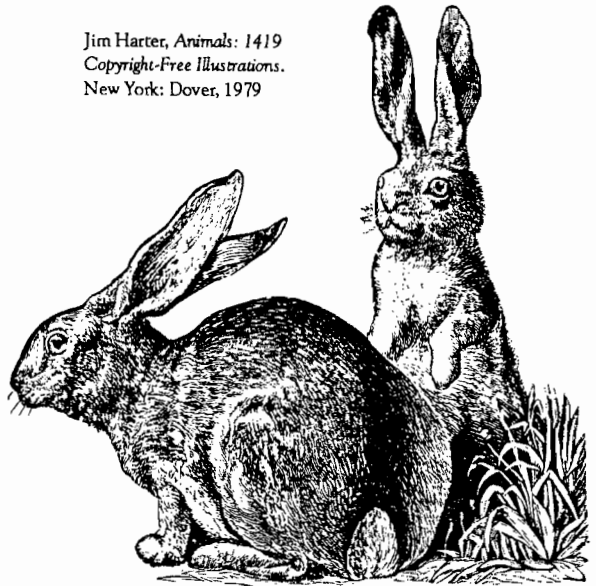
The publicity was staggering — largely through the wealth and pull of the father and the timeliness of the enterprise. Although money was no problem in the construction and firing of the rocket, enthusiastic space-age fans from coast to coast contributed. The father, who paid a fantastic sum for insurance, through Lloyds' of London (because no American firm would handle it) to cover any accidents arising from the experiment — the father strutted and gloated no less than his two sons, who had been tagged by their teachers and national news media alike as "prodigies."

And one of the means the Usher boys employed to make their project life-like, one of the most exciting components to make it realistic, was the use of animals — mice, then hamsters — and, who could tell? — eventually, maybe a cat or dog. And this participation of live things in a rocket meant, to the boys, of course, training — training to accustom the passenger to dizziness — harsh training, more cruel than any imposed on men — a whirling about of the strapped-down creature 'til he was nearly dead — day after day of this "scientific" preparation.

To Mike Dacey and a few sane and rational critics of Government overspending, and to a handful of more sensitive folk active in the humane movement — to this tiny minority this was all a ghastly error — a pathetic display of American excesses in technological self-indulgence, an example of her spiritual immaturity, her juvenile imbalance in always putting practical power, cold know-how, before morality, idealism, or the deeper values.

In other words, as Mike Dacey put it, in this one chronicle of ambition was symbolized the whole debased, sterile, sordid horror of American Materialism, which had pushed her into Vietnam and was pushing her and all the other countries who envied and copied her Coca-Cola, drug-store culture — pushing them all to pollution of the environment, the extinction of nature along with man.

Jim Harter, *Animals*: 1419
Copyright-Free Illustrations.
New York: Dover, 1979



Mike Dacey came to Jory Trent's house one evening accompanied by a clergyman, Father Wilkins, who was President of a State Humane Society. Father Wilkins had a quiet, modest manner, and a genial "I-love-all-people-and-all-life," faintly roguish smile. His hair had fringes of white; he was tall and scraggy-necked and slightly stooped; and he had one bad fault — he kept falling asleep.

Even as Mike talked to Jory, Father Wilkins' head nodded, and he dropped off, sitting there relaxed and benign, in the ladder-back chair.

"Jory," Mike said, "we are going to attend the launching of the next Usher rocket. And Father Wilkins will be there also, and he will bring a lawyer, Mr. MacMahon, who is the official legal advisor of the Humane Society."

Jory glanced at Father Wilkins, whose chin was now touching his chest.

"Mr. MacMahon will bring a moving-picture camera," said Mike, in a tone of great satisfaction.

"Yes," added Father Wilkins, and his head lifted, and his eyes glistened with combative zeal, conspiratorial zest — he had been half-asleep but actually awake all the time, too — "and Mr. MacMahon is a very sharp, very modern lawyer, and we hope he will represent us for nothing since we are a public service without any paid help — and he proposed to bring this camera, because he, like most humanitarians, was feeling the rocket will fail — and if we can get *evidence* of the hamsters' suffering and death, before or after the blast-off, we'll have a fine — I might say '*blasted fine*' — bit of evidence for prosecution and jury conviction — and a crushing defeat for popular acceptance of cruelty in this country — in things like rodeos with their terrible

bucking straps that squeeze the horse's testicles to make him livelier, the donkey ball games with their cloddish overloading, knocking down, and dragging about, and in at-home experiments on animals by school children who are completely unauthorized to practice such dissection, mutilation, poisoning, or what-not, and too young to care about the agony."

Father Wilkins drew a breath.

"Because, if we can slap down these barbarians at the very point where they have achieved their biggest publicity — the space-age, interplanetary-travel gimmick — then we'll really win a victory for mercy, over the theory of 'anything for science,' any atrocity for 'progress,' the hope of artificially extending man's life maybe a few months more, forcing it beyond a natural limit."

And the clergyman gave Jory a charming, roguish smile, and his eyelids began to close and his head began to nod again, immediately.

Mike winked at Jory.

"He's a great character, this Father Wilkins," he said; "stays up every night in the week helping some poor mortal or some wretched animal — so he never gets sleep — except at some awkward moments."

Jory laughed.

"I don't mind listening to someone like him," he said. "It doesn't sound like preaching. It's all God's truth."

To Be Concluded...

